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Contents

Rethinking the Concept of *Fiṭra:* Natural Disposition, Reason and Conscience

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Abstract

Little attention has been given to the role of innate human nature or *fiṭra* in the motivation behind human action. This

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article examines the views of contemporary Western thinkers to creatively rethink the concept of *fiṭra*, not only from a theological perspective but also a scientific perspective. Drawing upon Islamic scholarship and previous research on the subject that explore the wide spectrum of connotations couched in the Islamic term *fiṭra* in comparison with Western perspectives, this study offers a fresh look at, and approach to, the concept of human disposition or primordial nature, giving special attention to the biological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions, while most studies of *fiṭra* focus mainly on the theological and spiritual sides. It is hoped that this conceptual analysis will serve as a stepping stone towards a more nuanced understanding of *fiṭra* not only as (i) a natural tendency to act or think in a particular way, but also as (ii) the religious instinct, (iii) the power of the mind to think and understand in a logical way, and (iv) the inner voice or conscience of what is right and wrong in one's conduct or motives that drives the individual towards right action.

Keywords: Human natural disposition; *fitra*; human agency; instinct; conscience

Contemporary philosophers of action discussing human agency have usually focused on what distinguishes action from event, exploring how different notions of agency, intention, and volition have affected our understanding of mental causation, moral responsibility, decision theory, and criminal liability, to name but a few.[1] Little attention, if any, has been given to the importance of human natural disposition, reason, and conscience, let alone the role each of these plays in motivating or preventing an action. This article suggests that the Islamic concept of *fiṭra* offers contemporary philosophers of action valuable resources to creatively rethink current conceptions of human nature within the theory of human agency. Drawing upon Islamic scholarship and previous research on the subject,[2] it seeks to reveal not only the wide spectrum of connotations couched in the Arabic term *fiṭra* in comparison with Western perspectives but also the conceptual content and explanatory

significance of the multi-layered notion of *fiṭra* bearing upon the nature and scope of human agency.

Specifically, this article submits that (a) there is an inextricable link between human *fiṭra* and human agency; (b) *fiṭra* is natural disposition with multiple dimensions: biological (physical), theological (spiritual), ethical (moral), and intellectual (epistemological); and (c) a comprehensive account of *fiṭra* will contribute to a better understanding of human agency. It is hoped that this article will serve as a stepping stone towards a more nuanced understanding of *fiṭra* not only as (i) a natural tendency to act or behave in a particular way, but also as (ii) the religious instinct, (iii) the power of the mind to think and understand in a logical way, and (iv) the inner voice or conscience of what is right and wrong in one's conduct or motives that drives an individual human being towards right action.

Etymology of *Fiṭra*

The Arabic term *fiṭra* is one of the most frequently discussed subjects in Islamic thought and has been variously translated as 'human nature', 'natural disposition', 'natural reason', or simply as 'instinct'.[3] Muslim authorities on Qur'anic exegesis (*mufassirūn*), scholars of Islamic law (*fuqahā'*), philosophers (*falāsifah*), theologians (*mutakallimūn*), and Sufis have all associated different terminologies with *fiṭra* and specified the use of the term differently depending on context. Arabic lexicographers present quite a wide-ranging and interrelated meaning of its triliteral root *f-ṭ-r* namely, to split, to cleave, to crack, and bring forth, to produce, and to create. When applied to objects such as camel, clay or dough, the verb *faṭara* signifies milking, pressing and squeezing in order to release or bring out something. In the Holy Qur'an, it appears eight times in the sense of "create" or "constitute" (e.g., 6:79 and 17:51), while its active participle form is used six times to describe God as the "creator" (*fāṭir*) of the heavens and the earth (e.g., 6:14 and 12:101). Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī defines *fiṭra* as the natural disposition to accept religion, knowledge and morality (*al-jibillah al-mutahayyi'ah li-qabūl al-dīn wa-al-'ilm wa-al-akhlāq*), while his predecessor al-Ghazālī talks of some "initial

original disposition" (*al-fiṭra al-aṣliyya*) of human beings that is universal and common to all, regardless of race, gender, or culture.[4]

In Islamic legal (*fiqh*) literature, the term *fiṭra* is used in two senses. First, it is used to signify the set of practices observed by the earlier prophets and their people, which the Prophet Muḥammad followed and prescribed for his community as well. A widely known tradition transmitted by Muslim mentions no less than ten recommended habits, namely, (i) trimming the moustache, (ii) keeping the beard, (iii) using the tooth-stick (*siwāk*), (iv) snuffing water in the nose, (v) pairing the nails, (vi) washing the finger joints, (vii) pulling out the hairs of the armpits, (viii) shaving the pubic hair, (ix) cleaning the private parts, and (x) rinsing the mouth.[5] All these practices, called *sunan al-fiṭra* ('practices of the natural state of man') should be observed because the Devil is believed to take up his abode in the dirty areas of human body. According to one ḥadīth, these observances are enjoined every forty days, while another ḥadīth says it should be performed every two weeks. It is reported that the Prophet used to pair his nails on Friday before going out to perform the Friday prayer and Abraham is said to have been the first person in humanity who pared his nails.[6] In the second sense, the term *fiṭra* is used to denote the mandatory charity at the end of Ramaḍān imposed on every Muslim, whether freeman or slave, male or female.[7]

1. Biological *Fiṭra*

In spite of its varying and seemingly unrelated meanings, the Arab philologists agree on the usage of *fiṭra* as a technical term in the context of Islamic religious discourse to mean "the natural constitution with which a child is created in his mother's womb" (*al-khilqah allatī yukhlaqu 'alayhā al-mawlūd fī baṭni ummihi*).[8] This is what I call the 'biological *fiṭra*', which comprises not only anatomical features but also the physiological and psychological traits, instincts and impulses, appetites and lust, needs and abilities common to all human beings, although we do not concur with the Darwinists' claim about the evolution of *homo sapiens* (the 'knowing man') and other related species from the allegedly last common ancestor with chimpanzees and other great apes.[9] Without a

biological *fiṭra* that readies them for the world, living beings would not stand as good a chance of surviving. An animal that was unable, for example, to grasp critical cause-effect relationships in its environment would fare poorly in life's tough competition. In this view, the human mind at birth is neither a blank slate, as some radical empiricists want us to believe, nor is it filled with knowledge as Plato imagined. The truth lies somewhere in between; we are born ready to explore the world with a mind equipped with basic instincts and skills necessary for survival.

Biological *fiṭra* refers to the physical constitution of the human being with all the components (i.e. body parts such as the blood, heart, brain, etc.) that enables them to act or behave 'mechanically', as it were, but also imposes some limitations upon them. It is what Muslim scholars like al-Fīrūzābādī and al-Jurjānī refer to as *khilqah* and *jibillah* in Arabic, meaning something so ingrained and firmly fixed in the self that it cannot be altered, resisted or eliminated without adverse effects (damage, dysfunction, tension, impairment, failure etc.). Thus, for example, delaying the call of one's biological *fiṭra* for too long or making a habit of not relieving oneself in the toilet often enough may lead to a urinary tract infection. The God-created biological *fiṭra* manifests itself in the endocrine system which controls our body chemistry, releases and sends hormones through the bloodstream, and the nervous system responsible for monitoring the outside world, governing our movements, sense perception, memory and cognition, consciousness and emotions. It is part of our biological *fiṭra* to be curious, to experience hunger (whether due to an empty stomach or a high level of glucose in the blood), to feel sleepy, to forget, or to seek attention, to love and enjoy the company of others. Biological *fiṭra* also sets limits to what we can and cannot do, take or bear. For example, we can only hear sounds ranging from 20 to 20,000 Hz (*herz*), so that all sounds below the limit of human ears cannot be heard except with some hearing equipment or audio amplifier, while any loud sound above the audible range can cause irritation and even damage to the ears.[10]

Biological *fiṭra* corresponds to what modern psychology calls 'instinct', defined as "the inherent tendency of a living organism to exhibit a particular complex pattern of behavior".[11] According to psychologist

Granville Stanley Hall, basic instincts such as the will to live or survive, love of offspring, fear and anger, jealousy, attachments, memory, attention, senses, knowledge of locality and home-making instincts are common across animals and humans alike. Instincts are said to be nature's solutions to particular survival challenges and reproductive problems, which explains why animals and humans alike tend to flock and cooperate, seek pleasure, mate and beget.[12] Instinctive behaviors are manifestations of innate biological factors, based neither upon learning nor prior experience. It is the human instinct of love and compassion that accounts for parenting care, voluntary social service and solidarity as well as attraction to another individual of the opposite sex. In the same vein, the instinct of pugnacity provides protection against threats and dangers, and thereby produces a variety of self-assertive impulses, such as revenge, rivalry, warfare and moral indignation, which, in turn, lead to the emergence of morality and law. Researchers have also associated instinct with language development, decision making, patterning, numbers, music and even computing.[13] Instinct is acknowledged as a driving force of civilization in human and non-human animals.[14]

2. Theological *Fiṭra*

Most scholarly discussions of *fiṭra* take as their point of departure the Qur'anic verse (30:30), which reads: "So set your face toward the true religion, as you incline naturally towards Truth in accordance with the natural constitution of God (*fiṭra Allāh*) in which He created humans (*faṭara al-nās ʿalayhā*); there is no alteration in God's creation" (30:30). Many of the early Muslim commentators argue that the term *fiṭra* in this verse denotes the sound nature of human being, by which an individual is inclined towards belief in the existence of a Supreme Being that is controlling the destiny of man. It is interpreted as meaning that all types of created beings have their own nature that is permanent and all the same in all parts of the world.

The fifth century linguist al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī asserts that the phrase *fiṭra Allāh* in this context refers to the innate potential for faith which God has implanted in the souls of all individuals (*mā rakaza fīhi min*

quwwatihi ʿalā maʿrifat al-īmān).[15] We call this 'theological *fiṭra*', which enables all living beings to know God, their Creator. It is the spiritual intelligence instilled in all creatures that allows them to recognize God as the true Maker, Controller and Sustainer of all that exists in the universe, who alone deserves worship, obedience and glorification. Consequently, 'theological *fiṭra'* is none other than the natural tendency to embrace *islām* or become *muslim* in the sense of submitting oneself to the will and law of God, as explicitly stated in the Qur'an (3:83): "All creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willingly or unwillingly, submitted (*aslama*) to Him, and to Him shall they all be returned".

This scriptural base has been enriched by a well-known Prophetic tradition which appears in several variants in the Sunnī ḥadīth collections, stating that everyone is born a Muslim and that Islam is the universal religion of birth. The variants state: (i) "Every child is born in the natural state (*kullu mawlūd yūladu ʿalā al-fiṭra*); (ii) "Every human being is given birth to by his mother according to the original disposition (*kullu insān taliduhu ummuhu ʿalā al-fiṭra*). It is his parents who later turn him into a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian" (*wa abawāhu baʿdu yuhawwidānihi wa yunaṣṣirānihi wa yumajjisānihi*); (iii) "There is no child born except that he is born with the natural constitution (*mā min mawlūd illā yūladu ʿalā al-fiṭra)*, then his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian—just as camels normally beget sound calves (*kamā tuntiju al-ibil jamʿā'*); do you find any among them that are maimed?" [16] That *fiṭra* in this theological sense refers to the religion of Islam is attested in another tradition in which it is related that the Prophet taught a man to repeat certain words when lying down to sleep, and said: "Then if you die that same night, you die upon the true religion (*fa-in mitta, mitta ʿalā al-fiṭra*)."[17]

Drawing on these resources, Muslim writers developed the notion of *fiṭra* as a base disposition for religious belief, or indeed, as some would argue the point more thickly, for the Islamic faith. The religious *fiṭra* in the sense of natural faith in God was exemplified in the figure of the Prophet Abraham who, in his search for God, gazed at the stars, the moon, and the sun, wondering which one of these was God, and when he saw that all of them set, he said, "I do not adore things that set". So,

he looked beyond the created order and concluded that God cannot be one of those transient things. Abraham was guided from the idol worship of his people to the knowledge of God by his innate human capacity (*fiṭra*) to know God, saying that "I turn my face to Him who created the heavens and the earth, being righteous, I am not positing any deities besides Him" (6: 77-79). In other words, he was able to see, through the "light of reason" (*lumen rationis*), that there must be a God, a Supreme Being who is eternal, all-powerful, and different from this visible world. Abraham's natural renunciation of false gods and his turning away (i.e., being *ḥanīf*) from false religions is an expression of *fiṭra*. Indeed, the majority of Muslim exegetes interpret the word *ḥanīf* as someone who lived according to rules and convictions that are similar to the religion of all prophets. Thus, the Qur'an calls Abraham *ḥanīfan musliman* (3:67), a righteous person who submitted to the true God.

Despite the atheists' dismissal of religion as a mere psychological invention –born out of fear and confusion – to help us cope with the struggles of life and comfort us in the wake of misfortune, or give us strength in facing the certainty of death, belief in God has never vanished. All human societies are known to possess recognizably religious beliefs and practices. Even today religion continues to hold sway in societies not only in Asia but also in North America. Many sociologists are compelled to abandon the so-called 'secularization thesis' that predicted the decline, and eventual disappearance, of religion with the onset of modernity. By contrast, many contemporary biologists assert without qualm that a religious instinct is embedded as much in our genes as in our culture. For example, geneticist Francis Collins, the former director of the National Institutes of Health and leader of the Human Genome Project, as well as neurologist Andrew Newberg, contend that "the need for God" is implanted in the structure of the human brain, which explains why we have always longed to connect with something larger than ourselves. A similar conclusion was reached by Barbara Hagerty whose interviews with numerous neuroscientists and geneticists have revealed that an orientation towards spiritual transcendence is somehow hard-wired into the human brain.[18] Elsewhere, Huston Smith, a theist, and Henry Rosemont, an atheist, in a recent dialogue have come to

a concurring statement that religious instinct is present in all human societies all over the world in the same way that "universal grammar" is found in all humans, although they disagree about its ontological implications, that is, whether it constitutes a proof for the existence of God.[19] From this vantage point, it is safe to say that *fiṭra* can be understood as the innate psychological impulse for religion existing within the human spirit.[20]

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, several thinkers are known to have used *fiṭra* as an argument in their proof for the existence of God. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, for example, argues that God's existence needs no further proofs because belief in God is already instilled in the human nature and attested in the numerous verses of the Qur'ān *(fī fiṭrat al-insān wa-shawāhid al-Qur'ān mā yughnī ʿan iqāmat al-burhān).*[21] In a similar fashion, Ibn Taymiyyah considers human nature as a sufficient proof of God's existence. "The acknowledgement and recognition of God, the Creator," he declares, "is placed in the hearts of all humans and jinn" *(aṣl al-iqrār bi-al-ṣāniʿ wa-al-iʿtirāf bi-hi mustaqirr fī qulūb jamīʿ al-ins wa-al-jinn).*[22] In his view, rational arguments for God such as those adduced by theologians and philosophers are unnecessary, since the best method for proving the existence of God and the creation of the world is the natural method (*al-tarīqah al-fiṭriyyah*) of the Qur'an. Human knowledge of God is primarily through, and because of, their predisposition to faith which is the result of their primordial covenant with God as mentioned in the Qur'an 7: 172, "And when thy Lord brings forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, He calls upon them to bear witnesses about themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?', they said in reply, 'Yea, indeed we do bear witness thereto.' Lest you would say on the day of resurrection, 'Verily we were unaware of this."[23]

It is worth noting in this context, for the sake of comparison, that the innate ability of humans to recognize their Creator was also pointed out by a number of Western thinkers. The American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce maintains that a vague belief in God is instinctive for human beings, and an "argument for the reality of God" is not impossible to construct.[24] In the early modern era, the leading Christian Reformist Martin Luther and his contemporary Johannes Calvin also had a similar opinion. Luther posits

knowledge of God's existence as innate to human nature, and he rejects rational philosophical proofs for the existence of God as unnecessary and misguided. Belief in God, in his view, is inscribed in humans spiritually: *die natürliche Erkenntnis Gottes sind in des Menschen Herz eingeprägt; de Deo notitiae sunt naturaliter inscriptae in prima creatione.*[25] Since God has rightly placed beliefs in human hearts, there is no need for rational argumentation and logical deductions in order to prove the existence of God.[26] Luther distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge about God: the general and the specific. General knowledge of God is innate and therefore possessed by all humans, whereas the specific knowledge of God is acquired through piety.[27] By the same token Calvin maintains that "there is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God Himself has instilled in all men a certain understanding of His Divine Majesty."[28]

3. Epistemological *Fiṭra*

The third dimension of *fiṭra* has to do with cognition and reasoning. Muslim thinkers across disciplines seem to agree on the epistemological significance of *fiṭra*. Ibn Sīnā, for instance, says that primary concepts (*al-ma'qūlāt al-badīhiyyah*) such as 'being' or existence and unity are understood immediately because their meanings are imprinted in the soul (*ma'ānīhā tartasimu fī al-nafs*).[29] The same holds true for axioms such as 'the whole is bigger than the part' and 'one and the same thing cannot be both affirmed and denied at the same time', the truth of which is known by nature (*gharīziyyan*). He also speaks about a class of premises such as 'every four is an even number' which relies on a syllogism whose middle term is known through natural intelligence (*fiṭra*) and not acquired by means of learning or instruction.[30] In his psychology, *fiṭra* is said to consist of necessary judgements that are known through sense perception and shared by all human beings, regardless of race, culture or religion. Even though the judgements of *fiṭra* cannot be doubted within the realm of sense perception, they are, in Ibn Sīnā's view, not all true. This is so because of limitations in the estimative faculty (*wahm*), an

internal sense of the animal soul that perceives connotations in things not apparent merely from their physical forms. Thus, when a sheep perceives danger in a wolf, for example, that perception arises apart from the wolf's mere form. Consequently, according to Ibn Sīnā, some judgements of *fiṭra* that derive from the faculty of estimation (*wahm*) are false, in which case the true judgement must be obtained from the intellect. For example, the estimative faculty judges incorrectly that all existent things necessarily occupy space, whereas the intellect judges correctly that some existents do not occupy space (for example, an immaterial being such as God). Thus, the intellect is required to prevent *fiṭra* from making false judgements and corrupting true knowledge.[31] In his own words:

> The meaning of *fiṭra* is that one should imagine oneself as having come to the world all at once as an adult endowed with intellect, except that he has never heard any opinion, never believed in any doctrine, never associated with any religious community, and never known any government, but has experienced the objects of sense and taken from them images. Then he submits something from among them to his mind and raises a doubt about it. If he is able to doubt it, then his *fiṭra* does not attest to it; but if he is not able to doubt it, then it is something which his *fiṭra* imposes. But not everything which the human *fiṭra* imposes is true, but many of them are false. True is only the *fiṭra* of the faculty called 'intellect' … [Sometimes the *fiṭra* of estimation makes wrong judgments] and it is known that this *fiṭra* is false and the reason for it is that this is the natural operation of a faculty (*jibillat quwwatin*) that conceptualizes things only as objects of sensation (*'alā naḥw al-maḥsūs).*[32]

Ibn Sīnā employs the notion of *fiṭra* as natural intelligence, not only in connection with the mind's acknowledgment of the truth of primary and axiomatic propositions, but also with those which have their syllogisms built in (*al-qaḍāyā allatī qiyāsātuhā ma'a-hā*) or constructed through the natural operation of the mind (*muqaddamah fiṭriyyat al-qiyās*).[33] Primary propositions are those made necessary by the intellect alone through its

essence and natural disposition (*li-dhātihi wa-li-gharīzatihi*), not through any external cause; for no sooner does the intellect truly form the concept of the terms [of these propositions] than it acknowledges its truth.[34] From the illustration he gives it becomes clear that *fiṭra* is that which a person cannot doubt; it is all that is left in their minds when people are stripped of their knowledge, their eyesight, and their hearing.

A different concept of epistemological *fiṭra* is presented by Ibn Taymiyyah, for whom *fiṭra* is the sound nature by which an individual intuitively knows what is true and what is false. According to him, there exists within human nature the knowledge of truth and its attestation, as well as the recognition of falsehood and its rejection. It is something that God has molded initially (*khalaqa ʿibādahu ʿalā al-fiṭra allatī fī-hā maʿrifat al-ḥaqq wa-al-taṣdīq bi-hi wa-maʿrifat al-bāṭil wa-al-takdhīb bi-hi*), even though it may later be contaminated or spoiled.[35] For Ibn Taymiyyah, this inborn knowledge includes necessary (*ḍarūrī*), primary (*awwalī*), a priori (*badīhī*), and certainly true (*yaqīnī*) propositions, which he describes as knowledge that depends neither on discursive reasoning nor on demonstration; rather, it constitutes the very premises and axioms upon which apodeictic proofs are built.[36] This is why he considers *fiṭra* to be synonymous with *ʿaql* (reason) and *gharīzah* (instinct) by which humans conceive truths.[37] In his view, individuals with a sound *fiṭra* (*al-fiṭra al-salīmah*) can easily discern valid premises and arguments from invalid ones, since God has made the human *fiṭra* predisposed to the apprehension and cognition of the realities of things.[38]

Apart from denoting innate knowledge that comprises primary concepts or mental categories and primary propositions, epistemological *fiṭra* signifies that which Robert T. Pennock calls the human instinct for truth.[39] As Aristotle has noted in the first book of his *Metaphysics*, all human beings by nature desire to know (*Πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει*).[40] There exists within us an urge to know the truth, to learn things we did not already know before, or to discover what has been a secret, hidden, missing or shrouded in mystery. Some have labelled it the 'thirst for information', which explains children's natural curiosity and eagerness to explore everything around them, as well as adults' need for news about people, things or events around them.[41]

Epistemological *fiṭra* therefore accounts for curiosity which, according to Pennock, is the most idiosyncratic and the most characteristic of the scientific virtues, since science is better characterized as a series of questions pursued by inquisitive minds that just cannot stop wondering what or why.[42] An instructive case in point is that of Charles Darwin who wrote that he felt within himself "an instinct for truth, or knowledge or discovery" that was "of the same nature as the instinct of virtue", and that "our having such an instinct is reason enough for scientific researches without any practical results ever ensuing from them."[43]

Moreover, the instinct for truth also predisposes human beings to favor honesty and truthfulness over hypocrisy and deceit. Even liars hate liars, and certainly do not like to be fooled or cheated. Interestingly, due to this epistemological *fiṭra,* humans are gullible and prone to deception. Most of us tend to trust others and believe they are telling the truth. We can be so cognitively overwhelmed, and then irrationally convinced, by emotional displays and logically fallacious arguments. However, this *fiṭra* also enables us to detect falsehood, uncover scams, fraud, and cover-ups of all kinds. This natural inclination for truth explains why children are sensitive to lying and deception, while adults despise lies. Researchers have found that although children are capable of lying, many fail to conceal their lies or maintain consistency between the lie and subsequent statements. Their natural tendency (*fiṭra*) to speak the truth overrides the pressure to tell lies regardless of risk or benefit, causing them to revert to the original predisposition to answer truthfully when they are interrogated—a phenomenon referred to by psychologists as the breakdown or loss of 'semantic leakage control'.[44] One of the reasons why they revert to honesty is that telling lies, whether to avoid punishment, to gain some profit, or just to bolster their status, actually makes them internally uncomfortable. Deep down, we all know and understand that lying is wrong. This brings us to the next aspect human *fiṭra*: conscience.

4. Ethical or Moral *Fiṭra*

Perhaps the most important of all is what we might call the ethical or moral *fiṭra*, by which human beings know what is right and wrong, good

and evil. It is something within us that acts as an internal judge of the worth of all our actions, and influences how we behave by making us experience guilt and shame when we do wrong. This moral *fiṭra* is analogous to the Greek concept of *suneídēsis* (**συνείδησις**) and the medieval Latin *conscientia* in many respects, both of which carry a double meaning of apprehension and awareness, which are still preserved in the French *conscience* and the German *Bewußtsein.* Indeed, in the Middle Ages, conscience was regarded less as a faculty than as an aspect of practical reason closely linked to ethical virtues. It was not until the early modern period that conscience came to be increasingly viewed as an aspect of the soul that functioned as the God-given guide and judge for distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting the individual to choose the former and avoid the latter, commending the one, condemning the other. In our times, with the rise of professional psychology, conscience come to be regarded as a faculty of the human mind on a par with the intellect, will, and memory. Its principal functions are to represent to the individual the universal laws of moral behavior, apply them in specific cases, and punish the individual for going against them. Conscience serves as a whistle blower when humans cross moral lines. Contemporary psychologists label it the 'moral punishment instinct'.[45]

In the Islamic tradition, there is a saying attributed to the Prophet concerning ethical or moral *fiṭra.* As reported by al-Nawwās ibn Samʿān, the Prophet once said, "Piety is good manners, and sin is that which causes discomfort in your innerself (*al-ithmu mā ḥāka fī nafsika*) and you do not want people to know it (*wa-karihta an yaṭṭaliʿa ʿalayhi al-nās*)".[46] In another ḥadīth, Wābiṣah ibn Maʿbad reported that during his visit he was asked by the Prophet, "Have you come to inquire about piety?", to which he replied in the affirmative. Then the Prophet said, "Ask your heart regarding it. Piety is that which contents the soul and comforts the heart (*al-birr mā iṭma'annat ilayhi al-nafs wa-iṭma'anna ilayhi al-qalb*), and sin is that which raises doubts and disturbs the heart (*taraddada fī al-ṣadr*), even if people pronounce it lawful and give you verdicts on such matters again and again".[47] From these Prophetic traditions we can infer that apart from being a breach of the laws and norms laid down by religion, there is a psychological aspect of sin as wrongdoing. Sin is that

which is done against one's conscience, resulting in disorder, disharmony and disturbance in the soul of its perpetrator. Besides being a violation of the rights of others (i.e., that of fellow creatures and the rights of God), sin is a moral evil. Sin is wrongdoing and injustice against oneself. On the verge of doing it, the individual normally shakes as he hesitates and suspects it may not be the right thing to do. In the aftermath of it, a deep sense of guilt, shame and regret emerge, thereby inflicting psychological pain and suffering. This is why no sinner is happy on the inside and in the Afterlife, no matter how hard they may try to conceal their misery.

Furthermore, ethical *fiṭra* explains so-called 'altruistic behavior', whereby people choose to help others simply out of a desire to help, not because they feel obligated to out of duty, loyalty, or religious reasons. Sometimes they do so at a cost to themselves or at the expense of their own lives. Altruistic behavior is common throughout the animal kingdom. Unselfish behavior by an animal that may be to its disadvantage but that benefits others of its species is an outward manifestation of ethical *fiṭra.* Indeed, many human beings are willing to make sacrifices for the happiness and welfare of other people, not because of, but in spite of, rewards and punishments. We show concern and give help not only to relatives and friends, but also to strangers. All this is driven by the guiding force in human behavior which Sigmund Freud calls the *Super Ego,* otherwise labelled in contemporary psychology as the 'compassionate instinct' as well as the 'forgiveness instinct'.[48]

According to Freud, human personality (i.e., soul or psyche) is comprised of three forces or energies, each of which responsible for specific functions: the *id,* the *ego,* and the *superego.* The *id* consists of the basic urges for food, water, affection and sex. The *id* is the biological *fiṭra* of human beings, comprising both the instinct for life *(Eros)* and the instinct of death *(Thanatos).* The life instinct is said to be responsible for the need for food, love and sex, which are necessary for survival, cooperation and reproduction, whereas the death instinct is a subconscious drive towards aggression, violence and destruction. The *id* always seeks gratification and operates on a 'pleasure principle'. When the *id* is not satisfied, tension occurs. It is the task of the second force, the *ego,* to advise the *id* not indulge its craving for everything, as it may not be the effective way of

maintaining life. The *ego* thus operates on the 'reality principle', mediating between the demands of reality and the desires of the *id.* The *ego* corresponds to what is called the rational *fiṭra,* which enables a person to ponder carefully before making any decision, inference or judgment. Allegorically, the *ego* may be compared to a rider on the horse that is the *id.* While it derives its energies from the *id,* the *ego* must control and direct the *id.* Finally, there is the *superego* which carries society's moral values, and acts like a supervisor to both the *id* and *the ego.* It is the one which makes us feel uncomfortable when we do other than we should. The *superego* produces in us the painful feelings of disgrace or worthlessness and remorse when we have done something improper, offensive, immoral or illegal, or when we fail to do something that we are responsible for.[49] Thus the *superego* is equivalent to conscience, which in turn is identical to 'moral *fiṭra*', a little voice inside a person reminding oneself what is right and wrong.

5. Corruption of Natural Disposition (*Fasād al-Fiṭra)*

No one is born a liar or murderer, saint or sinner, joker or philosopher. As declared by the Prophet in the famous ḥadīth, every child is born in the natural state of *fiṭra.* In their initial, natural state, all children are innocent and naïve, unbiased and indifferent to virtues and vices. It is the environment and society – including parents, relatives, friends, teachers and associates (human as well as nonhuman satans), that turn them into good or bad persons, exert their influence on human thoughts and actions, and therefore alter or spoil their *fiṭra.* Although there is disagreement among Muslim scholars concerning the mutability of *fiṭra,*[50] there is no dispute regarding the role of Satan in obstructing the acts of human beings or interfering in their daily affairs.

Indeed, in the Islamic as well as the Judeo-Christian tradition, the role of the Devil (*Iblīs*) or Satan (*Shayṭān*) in inciting human beings to disobedience, wickedness and all sorts of evil is always underscored. The Devil or Satan is said to be the first creature to disobey God, and therefore he was cursed and expelled from Paradise. Although he was condemned to eternal punishment in Hell, he was set free until Judgment Day as a

result of his double plea for the postponement of his punishment and for license to lead humans astray (7: 16-22). Satan is said to be the force of malevolence which partly contributes to the corruption of human *fiṭra*.[51] Various sins and crimes committed by humans are the result of following in Satan's footsteps (*ittabaʿū khuṭuwāt al-Shayṭān*) and their falling prey to his whisperings (*waswās*) and temptations. Satan incites humans to heresy, apostasy, and idolatry; he urges avarice, enmity, and conflict;[52] he leads them to ignore their duty to God and to break His law. For his antagonistic role Satan is described in the Qur'an as the 'plain enemy' of humanity (7:22, 17:53 and 43:62). Nevertheless, even though Satan was given permission by God to tempt and deceive human beings, and he vowed to do so by all means available, human beings remain free to choose between good and evil. Satan himself admits that he has no authority over them, and that his job is simply to seduce them as he did with Adam, and they have the ability to resist his insinuations. Thus, no one can excuse himself by arguing that Satan made him do it, for Satan has the power only to tempt and invite, never to compel and coerce.[53]

The close association of Satan with human beings and his impact on human thought and behavior is attested in a well-known ḥadīth of the Prophet which says that Satan runs through the blood vessels of human beings (*inna al-Shayṭān yajrī majrā al-dam*).[54] Even the Prophet, whose interior has been cleansed, is not exempt from such attachment; his only advantage is that, with God's help, the Satan attached to his body was converted to Islam and therefore was a force only for good in his life. In other words, the Prophet was immune to Satanic interference. As he reportedly declared, "There is no one among you who does not have a spirit (*jinn)* as his companion placed in charge of him." They said, 'What about you, O messenger of God?' He said, 'Even me, except that God came to my assistance against him and he has become Muslim. Now he only urges me to good."[55] In the case of ordinary people like ourselves, therefore, it is even harder to resist the Satanic forces that some have mistaken for what is otherwise called the 'killer instinct'.[56]

Besides affecting one's moral integrity, corruption of one's *fiṭra* also leads to cognitive failure. As noted by Ibn Sīnā in his treatise on logic, while most human beings would have no difficulty grasping rational

truths such as axiomatic propositions or first principles, some people cannot apprehend, or simply reject the truth of such propositions because of their underdeveloped intelligence, defective nature (*naqṣ fī fiṭratihi*), mental disability, and old age, or due to confusion with contrary views and certain misconceptions in their minds.[57] Along the same lines, Ibn Taymiyyah mentions a number of factors that often lead to the contamination, corruption or distortion of *fiṭra:* (i) following one's personal whims (*hawā*), (ii) harboring personal interests (*gharaḍ*), biases or prejudices; (iii) blind imitation (*taqlīd*) or uncritical acceptance of inherited beliefs (*iʿtiqādāt mawrūthah*); and (iv) entertaining conjecture (*ẓann*) and doubts (*shubuhāt*).[58] Unless one's *fiṭra* is purged of these deficiencies it cannot function properly. Error and confusion, as well as misjudgment and misconduct are due to these factors, apart from Satanic influences. Ibn Taymiyyah compares human nature to a newborn's instinct for its mother's milk. The newborn will drink it if unimpeded; that is, it will actualize the potentiality of its instinct to drink.[59]

In Ibn Taymiyyah's view, human nature, if it is in sound condition (*al-fiṭra al-salīmah*),[60] will "necessarily give witness, due to its very essence and by the necessity of its natural reasoning, to the existence of a Creator who is ever-knowing, omnipotent, and wise", as pointed out in many Qur'anic verses such as 14:10, "Can there be any doubt about God, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?", and 43:87, "And if you ask them as to who it is that has created them, they are sure to answer, 'God!'. How perverted then are their minds." Moreover, even if human *fiṭra* were not sensitive to God's existence during happy times, it would certainly be sensitive during difficult times. Thus, the Qur'anic verse, 17:67, "And when danger befalls you at sea, all those that you are wont to invoke forsake you, except Him." If human *fiṭra* is not spoiled, man would certainly find in it the love of God, since the source of knowledge of God is the *fiṭra*-based love of God *(maḥabbat Allāh)*.[61] It is the distorted *fiṭra* that leads a person to error and unbelief. Only when *fiṭra* is cleansed of its carnal desires (*shahawāt*) and intellectual doubts (*shubuhāt*), can it actualize knowledge, love, and worship of God.

The indisputable role of Satan in perverting humans' rational, moral, and religious *fiṭra* and interfering in their psychic life is accentuated in

another famous tradition of the Prophet, which relates that God said, "I have created all of my servants inclined to worship, but satans come to them who turn them away from their religion *(atathum al-shayāṭīn fa-ijtālathum ʿan dīnihim)*; they ban what has been made lawful for them, and they command them to associate partners with me for which no authority has been revealed".[62] As a result, many humans, when they grow up, become atheists – who deny the existence of God and reject all religious belief, agnostics or skeptics – who question the existence of God, afterlife, etc., in the absence of material proof, deists – who believe in God as a creative, moving force but who otherwise reject formal religion and its doctrines of revelation, divine authority, etc., and pluralists – who assert that all religions are equally true and valid paths to God. Others become villains and criminals who can lie all day, commit theft, violence, murder, etc., without feeling the slightest bit of shame, guilt or remorse. So corrupted is their *fiṭra* that no amount of counsel and guidance can restore it. The Qur'an describes some humans whose rational, moral, and religious *fiṭra* has been spoiled as those who "have minds but they don't understand; who have eyes but they don't see; who have ears but they don't hear; who are like animals, or even below them" (7:179). They are the unwary souls whom satans have ensnared and distracted from the path of God, whose reason has been contaminated, and whose conscience blinded or totally debilitated. Indeed, many culprits who end up in jail for a violent crime do not feel sorry at all; some of them appear as if they do not understand that what they did was wrong, or do not believe that what they did was a crime, which was what led them to act in the first place.

Concluding Remarks

The subject of human nature stands at the crossroads of a number of related disciplines. On the one hand, it belongs to the domain of theology and epistemology. On the other hand, it is part and parcel of psychology and moral philosophy. From the foregoing discussion it becomes clear that the Islamic concept of human natural disposition couched within the word *fiṭra* with its wide-ranging meaning is a useful explanatory term

for understanding the complexity of human action and the interplay of its various determinant. Apart from its biological function, *fiṭra* underpins not only the human cognitive and moral faculties but also forms the basis of religious faith and justice. Unlike previous interpretations, the conception of *fiṭra* delineated in the preceding pages provides for a richer and more nuanced account of human action, cognition, conscience, and religion.

Endnotes

1 See, for example, Stuart Hampshire, *Thought and Action* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1959); Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980; A. Mele (ed.), *The Philosophy of Action* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997); John Hyman and Helen Steward (eds.), *Agency and Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004).

2 One may, inter alia, refer to M. J. Kister, "Pare Your Nails: A Study of an Early Tradition," in *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 11 (1979): 63-70; Yasien Mohamed, *Fiṭra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1996); id., "The Interpretations of *Fiṭra*," in *Islamic Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1995): 129–51; Geneviève Gobillot, *La Fiṭra: la conception originelle, ses interpretations et functions chez les penseurs musulmans* (Damascus: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2000); Camilla Adang, "Islam as the inborn religion of mankind: the concept of *fiṭra* in the works of Ibn Hazm," in *Al-Qantara* vol. 21 (2000): 391-410; Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's use of "original human disposition" *(fiṭra)* and its background in the teachings of al-Fārābī and Avicenna," in *The Muslim World* 102 (2012): 1–32; Jon Hoover, "Fiṭra", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd Ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2016); and Raissa A. von Doetinchem de Rande, "Is the *fiṭra* mutable? A reformist conception of human perfection in Shāh Walī Allāh's Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33/1 (2023): 87-109.

3 There is no consensus among scholars on how to translate *fiṭra,* which has been rendered as 'primordial nature' (by Oliver Leaman), 'natural disposition' (Camilla Adang), 'natural intelligence' (Anke von Kugelgen), 'original human disposition' (Frank Griffel), 'original normative disposition' (Carl El-Tobgui), 'innate inclination' (Andrew March), *'la disposition originelle'* (Guy Monnot), *'l'authentique prédisposition*' (Marie-Th. Urvoy), *'la conception originelle'* (Geneviève Gobillot), , *'tendance naturelle humaine bonne'* (Olivier Carré), '*élan originel*' (Paul Valadier), *'un état naturellement pur*' (Géraldine Mossière), *'nature religieuse naturelle ou innée'* (Yves Gonzalez-Quijano), *'der Stand der Unschuld*' (Josef van Ess), *'natürliche Bestimmung*' (Mathias Rohe), *'die gottgegebene Ordnung*' (Joachim Langner).

4 See al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1357/1938), p. 147 and al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl,* in *Majmūʿat Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn, 7 parts (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2007), p. 26.

5 Muslim (1: 223). Another ḥadīth transmitted by al-Bukhārī tells us that five practices belong to the *sunan al-fiṭra,* namely, (i) circumcision, (ii) keeping the nails pared, (iii) trimming the moustache, (iv) letting the beard grow, and (v) removing underarm hair.

6 For further discussion, see M. J. Kister, "Pare Your Nails: A Study of an Early Tradition," in *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 11 (1979): 63-70.

7 See the relevant entry in *al-Mawsūʿah al-Fiqhiyyah* (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1415/1995), vol. 32, p. 182: "*wa-al-fiṭra bi-kasr al-fā' jā'at ayḍan bi-maʿnā ṣadaqat al-fiṭr*".

8 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Būlāq: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Amīriyyah, 1300/1882), vol. 5, p. 363; cf. Edward W. Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), vol. 6, p. 2416.

9 For example, a Darwinist science popularizer writes: "Up to 10 million years after the appearance of our earliest ancestors, Homo Sapiens not only look, move and breathe like an ape, they also think like one." See Dr Hwa A. Lim, PhD, *Multiplicity Yours: Cloning, Stem Cell Research, and Regenerative Medicine* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2006), pp. 53-54.

10 It has been reported that college students who frequently listen to loud rock bands suffer some hearing loss. See D.M. Lipscomb, "Ear Damage from Exposure to Rock and Roll Music," in *Archives of Otolaryngology,* 90 (1969): 545-555.

11 Kostas N. Fountoulakis et al., *Psychobiology of Behaviour* (New York: Springer Verlag, 2019), 88. For a comparative discussion, see William James, "Instinct" [originally published in 1890], in *Psychology: The Briefer Course*, ed. Gordon Allport (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 258–281; C.L. Morgan, "Some Definitions of Instinct," in *Natural Sciences*, vol. 7 (1895): 321-329; Paul Baker, "Is the Instinct Theory Reliable as an Explanation of Human Behavior?" in *Social Science*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1927): 341–348; Mark S. Blumberg, *Basic Instinct: The Genesis of Behavior* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006); Robert M. Winston, *Human Instinct: How Our Primeval Impulses Shape Our Modern Lives* (London: Bantam Books, 2008); and Kenneth R. Miller, *The Human Instinct: How We Evolved to Have Reason, Consciousness, and Free Will* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

12 See Nichola Raihani, *The Social Instinct: How Cooperation Shaped the World* (London: St. Martin's Press, 2021); Amy Chua, *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018); Bernd Heinrich, *The Homing Instinct: Meaning and Mystery in Animal Migration* (Boston: H.M. Harcourt, 2014); Gene Wallenstein, *The Pleasure Instinct: Why We Crave Adventure, Chocolate, Pheromones, and Music* (New York: Wiley, 2008).

13 Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (New York: Harper/Perennial, 2007); Namhee Lee et al., *The Interactional Instinct: The Evolution and Acquisition of Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Kevin Warwick et al., *Computing with Instinct: Rediscovering Artificial Intelligence* (Berlin: Springer, 2011); Andreas Nieder, *A Brain for Numbers: The Biology of the Number Instinct* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019); Philip Ball, *The Music Instinct: How Music Works and Why We Can't Do without It* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Francis Cholle, *The Intuitive Compass: Why the Best Decisions Balance Reason and Instinct* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

14 Edward O. Wilson and Bert Hölldobler, *The Leafcutter Ants: Civilization by Instinct* (New York: Norton, 2011).

15 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1412/1992), s.v. "f-ṭ-r".

16 The ḥadīth in its various versions as cited above is transmitted in Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, ed. M. Fu'ād ʻAbd al-Bāqī. 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1406/1985), 1: 241; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1423/2002), 327-328 and 334; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1421/2000), 1157-1158; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arna'ūṭ and Muḥammad Kāmil Qurabillī. 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 1430/2009), 7: 97.

17 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ḥadīth no. 6089 (kitāb al-Daʻawāt – bāb idhā bāta ṭāhiran).

18 See Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006) and Andre Newberg, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (2002).

19 Henry Rosemont and Huston Smith, *Is There a Universal Grammar for Religion?* (2008).

20 For further illumination, see Frank Milton Bristol, *The Religious Instinct of Man* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye 1904); Thomas John Hardy, *The Religious Instinct* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1913); William K. Wright, "Instinct and Sentiment in Religion", in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 1916), pp. 28-44; Jay Schulkin, "An Instinct for Spiritual Quests: Quiet Religion," in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 4 (2007): 307–320; Nicholas Wade, *The Faith Instinct: How Religion Evolved and Why It Endures* (New York: Penguin, 2009); Howard P. Kainz, *The Existence of God and the Faith-Instinct* (New Jersey: Rosemont Publishing, 2010); Jesse Bering, *The Belief Instinct* (New York: Norton, 2011); Jesse Bering, *The God Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny and the Meaning of Life* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2013); Justin L. Barrett, *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

21 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ʻUlūm al-Dīn* (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿah al-ʿUthmāniyyah al-Miṣriyyah, 1352/1933), vol. 1, pp. 93–94.

22 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar' Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa-al-Naql*, ed. M. Rashād Sālim (Riyadh, 1399–1400/1979–1980), vol. 8, p. 482. Henri Laoust calls it *l'innéisme et l'universalité de notre croyance en lui* ('innate and universal belief in Him') in his *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takī-d-dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taimīya* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1939), p. 153, n. 1.

23 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah fī Naqd Kalām al-Shīʿah wa-al-Qadariyyah,* 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʻah al-Amīriyyah, 1321/1903), vol. 3, pp. 100-101. For further discussion, see Wael B. Hallaq, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God," in *Acta Orientalia* 52 (1991), pp. 49-69.

24 See Michael Raposa, "Instinct and Inquiry: A Reconsideration of Peirce's Mature Religious Naturalism," in *Pragmatism and Naturalism: Scientific and Social Inquiry After Representationalism*, ed. Matthew Bagger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), pp. 27–43.

25 See Martin Luther, *Consilia Theologica Witebergensia* (Frankfurt am Main: Wust, 1664), p. 866; and *Luther und Melanchthon: Referate und Berichte des Zweiten Internationalen Kongresses für Lutherforschung*, ed. Vilmos Vajta (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), p. 59.

26 Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 13–20, cited by M. Sait Özervarli, "Divine Wisdom, Human Agency and the *Fiṭra* in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), p. 53.

27 *Martini Lutheri theologia pura et sincera ex viri divini scriptis universis*, ed. Johannes Henricus May (Frankfurt am Main: Maximilianus a Sande, 1709), p. 129: *"Duplex est cognitio Dei, generalis et propria. Generalem habent omnes homines, scilicet quod Deus sit, quod creaverit coelum et terram, quod sit Justus … Deinde satis testantur etiam cultus et religions, quae fuerunt et manserunt apud omnes gentes, quod omnes homines habuerunt generalem quondam notitiam Dei. Hoc lumen in omnium hominum cordibus est."*

28 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), vol. 1, pp. 43–44.

29 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā' fī al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. G.C. Anawati and Said Zayed (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-ʿĀmmah li-Shu'ūn al-Maṭābiʿ al-Amīriyyah, 1380/1960), p. 29.

30 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā': al-Manṭiq: al-Burhān*, ed. A.E. Afifi et al. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Amīriyyah, 1956), p. 64.

31 See Asad Q. Ahmed, *Avicenna's Deliverance: Logic* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3–5 and 89–93; Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of "Original Human Disposition" *(fiṭra)* and Its Background in the Teachings of al-Fārābī and Avicenna," in *the Muslim World*, vol. 102 (2012), pp. 11–25; and Jon Hoover, "Fiṭra", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd Edition (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

32 Ibn Sīnā, *Kitab an-Najāt.* ed. Mājid Fakhrī (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1405/1985), pp. 99; translation in Dimitri Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," in *Oriens*, vol.40, no.2 (2012), pp. 408-409, and Deborah Black, "Estimation *(Wahm)* in Avicenna: The Logical and Psychological Dimensions," in *Dialogue*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1993), p. 233. For the other references to *fiṭra* in Ibn Sīnā's works, see A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer), p. 19.

33 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt,* ed. J. Forget (Leiden: Brill, 1892), vol. 1, p. 58 and Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā': al-Manṭiq: al-Burhān*, ed. A.E. Afifi and I. Madkour (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Amīriyyah, 1956), p. 64.

34 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt,* vol. 1, p. 56.

35 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Naqḍ al-Manṭiq*, ed. M. Ḥāmid al-Fiqī et al. (Cairo, 1370/1951), p. 29. Ibn Taymiyyah's extensive treatment of *fiṭra* is found in his *Darʾ Taʿāruḍ*, vol. 8, pp. 359-535; as well as in his "Risālah fī al-kalām ʿalā al-Fiṭra" in *Majmūʿat al-Rasāʾil al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, pp. 332-349 and his *al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqiyyīn*, pp. 420-432.

36 Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 255-256.

37 Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Furqān bayna Awliyā' al-Raḥmān wa-Awliyā' al-Shayṭān* (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1382/1962), pp. 88-89.

38 See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar' Taʿāruḍ*, vol. 7, pp. 37-38. According to Sophia Vasalou, Ibn Taymiyyah was trying to disavow the binary opposition of Muʿtazilism and Ashʿarism on moral philosophy; he called for a new position that would be neither one but something in between which is both rooted in the scripture and explained in rationalist terms. "Right and wrong, he claimed, are known by reason *[ʿaql]*. And while the language of reason would indeed be deployed in couching this claim, Ibn Taymiyya in many places replaced it with another—that of *fiṭra*. The claim then became: We know what is right and wrong by the human *fiṭra*." See S. Vasalou, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3-4.

39 Robert T. Pennock, *An Instinct for Truth: Curiosity and the Moral Character of Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019).

40 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. and tr. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 980a 22, vol. 1, p. 2.

41 See Kenneth R. Hammond, *Beyond Rationality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 30. Cf. Amanda Spink, *Information Behavior: An Evolutionary Instinct* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2010)

42 Robert T. Pennock, *An Instinct for Truth: Curiosity and the Moral Character of Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019), p. 2.

43 Charles Darwin, "Letter to John Stephens Henslow," April 1, 1848. *Darwin Correspondence Project*, "Letter no. 1167," http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/DCP-LETT-1167.

44 Victoria Talwar et al., "Children's conception knowledge of lie-telling and its relation to their actual behaviors: implications for court competence examination," in *Law and Human Behavior* 26 (2002), pp. 395–415 and Salman Akhtar et al., *Lying, Cheating, and Carrying On: Developmental, Clinical, and Sociocultural Aspects of Dishonesty and Deceit* (Lanham: J. Aronson, 2009), pp. 34-35.

45 See Jan-Willem van Prooijen, *Perspectives on Justice and Morality: The Moral Punishment Instinct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) and Patricia S. Churchland, *Conscience: The Origins of Moral Intuition* (New York: Norton, 2019). There was a debate in the 1960s over whether human nature is primordially good or evil. The claim that human beings were instinctually aggressive found its most

articulate spokesmen in Lorenz and Ardrey, while the claim to the contrary was expressed in Montagu's writings that humans were naturally cooperative. Aside from their basic disagreement about the inherent tendency of human behavior, both camps actually agreed that there was such a thing as "human nature", possessing a definable essence and grounded in biological tendencies evident throughout the natural and animal worlds. See Nadine Weidman, *Killer Instinct: The Popular Science of Human Nature in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), p. 142.

46 The ḥadīth is considered authentic and transmitted in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, 32: 6195 and 32: 6196.

47 Transmitted by Aḥmad in his *Musnad,* al-Dārimī in his *Sunan,* and al-Ṭaḥāwī in his *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār.*

48 See Dacher Keltner et al., *The Compassionate Instinct: The Science of Human Goodness* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010) and Michael McCullough, *Beyond Revenge: The Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2008).

49 See Arnold M. Rothstein, "Shame and the Superego," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 49/1 (1994), pp. 263-277. Cf. Hisham Abu-Raiya, "Western Psychology and Muslim Psychology in Dialogue: Comparisons Between a Qura'nic Theory of Personality and Freud's and Jung's Ideas," in *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2014), pp. 326-338.

50 For a recent discussion on this issue, see Raissa A. von Doetinchem de Rande, "Is the *fiṭra* mutable? A reformist conception of human perfection in Shāh Walī Allāh's Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33/1 (2023): 87-109, who argues against the interpretation of *fiṭra* as human perfection that can fit different ages without essentially changing.

51 For an extensive discussion, see Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), especially pp. 18-56; and Edmund Beck, "Iblis und Mensch, Satan und Adam: Der Werdegang einer koranischen Erzahlung," in *Muséon* 89 (1976), pp. 195-244.

52 See the Qur'an 2:36; 3:155, 4:60, 5:91, 6:68, 12:42, 18:63, 7:27, 47:25, and 17:53.

53 The Qur'an 14:22 relates: "And Satan will say to his followers after the judgment has been passed, "Indeed, God has made you a true promise. I too made you a promise, but I failed you. I did not have any authority over you. I only called you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot save you, nor can you save me. Indeed, I denounce your previous association of me with Allah in loyalty. Surely the wrongdoers will suffer a painful punishment."

54 The ḥadīth is transmitted in varying word by al-Bukhārī and Muslim in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*s, Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, al-Tirmidhī in his *Sunan*, as well as al-Dārimī and al-Ṭaḥāwī in their respective collections.

55 See Muslim, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ,* 8: 139.

56 See, for example, Nadine Weidman, *Killer Instinct: The Popular Science of Human Nature in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021); Jonathan H. Pincus, *Base Instincts: What Makes Killers Kill?* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002) and Charles Stewart, *Dire Emotions and Lethal Behaviours: Eclipse of the Life Instinct* (London: Routledge, 2007).

57 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ: al-Manṭiq: al-Burhān*, ed. A.E. Afifi (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1955), p. 111.

58 See Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 263-264.

59 Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 42. The analogy is based on a ḥadīth reporting the incident in which the angel Gabriel, on the occasion of the Night Journey (*isrāʾ*) to Jerusalem and Ascent (*miʿrāj*) to the heaven, presented the Prophet with a cup of milk and a cup of wine, then told him to choose between the two. When the Prophet instinctively preferred the milk over the wine, the angel Gabriel responded, "You have chosen the *fiṭra*; had you chosen the wine, your community *(ummah)* would have gone astray." See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 852; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 87; and al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, 5:201–202.

60 For further discussion on *fiṭra* according to her, see Livnat Holtzman, "Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the *Fiṭra* Tradition: The Use of Hadith in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Y. Rapoport and S. Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 163–188; Nurcholish Madjid, *Ibn Taymiyya on Kalām and Falsafa*, PhD diss. University of Chicago, 1984, pp. 65-76; Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 39-44; and Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 260-264.

61 See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah fī Naqd Kalām al-Shīʿah wa-al-Qadariyyah*, 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Amīriyyah, 1321/1903), vol. 3, pp. 100-101; id., *Bayān Muwāfaqat Ṣarīḥ al-Maʿqūl li-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, printed on the margin of the *Minhaj al-Sunnah*, vol. 3, pp. 101-102. For more discussion on Ibn Taymiyyah's argument on human *fiṭra* as the basis for proving God's existence, see Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Jalayand, *al-Imam Ibn Taymiyyah wa Mawqifuhu min Qaḍiyyat al-Taʾwīl* (Cairo: al-Maṭābiʿ al-Amīriyyah, 1393/1973), pp. 327-338.

62 Transmitted by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ (kitab al-jannah wa-ṣifat naʿīmihā wa-ahlihā)* ḥadīth no. 2865.